

Keeping You Posted



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HUNGER ACTION SURVEY

Churches Focus on Direct Aid

UCC churches support direct service programs that help the hungry but get less involved with efforts to change the system, according to a UCC hunger ministries study survey.

The team, authorized by the Executive Council to study the denomination's hunger ministries, sent questionnaires to each UCC church. The response rate, over 14%, represented nearly 19% of all UCC members. Most of the churches had predominately white middle-class members earning an average of \$10,000-\$60,000 per family annually. The Hunger Action Fund supports some of the ministries reported on in the survey.

Most of the churches supported hunger ministries outside their facilities in cooperation with other community efforts. Eighty-six percent of the respondents supported food ministries, but only 59% of these were located in the church. Likewise, 45% contributed to food programs, but only 17% operated such programs themselves. Forty-three percent

helped shelter programs, but only 14% ran shelters as part of their ministry.

However, while UCC churches are helping to provide emergency aid to hungry neighbors, they give less support to advocacy work aimed at ameliorating the causes of hunger, says Neill Richards, coordinator of the UCC Hunger Action Office.

Only 12% of the churches were involved in community organizing, 11% in economic development programs and 9% in employment projects. Local church efforts to educate the public on the issue of hunger most frequently addressed domestic hunger (75%), world hunger (69%) and famine or disaster relief (57%). Topics discussed least frequently were U.S. foreign aid (8%), the Federal food stamps program (8%) and the Third World debt crisis (7%).

Churches often avoid "political or threatening" topics and tend not to include hunger in church school classes for children, Mr. Richards says.

World Board Staff Among Few Americans at Teheran Meeting

UCC Board for World Ministries officials are among eight Americans in Teheran for a recent international conference on aggression and defense, sponsored by the foreign ministry of Iran.

Dale Bishop, UCBWM's Middle East secretary, and Patricia Rumer, its Latin America secretary, were among several hundred participants in the Aug. 8-10 conference and were the only Americans from a religious body. The conference analyzed aggression and defense from theological, legal and political historical perspectives.

Dr. Bishop and Rumer also observed the streets in the streets, shops and market places.

Dr. Rumer says ordinary Iranians and intellectuals alike were puzzled and pained at what they had heard of the U.S. public's reaction to the July 3 incident in which a U.S. Navy ship in the Persian Gulf mistakenly shot down an Iranian civilian jetliner, killing 290 people. She says they had heard of polls showing

many Americans approved of the shooting and of a petition signed by Americans supporting the captain who decided to fire. She says it was hard to explain to them that there was "a genuine expression of regret and concern in the U.S. among the people we know."

The Americans were received warmly by cleaning women and taxi drivers who "said things like, 'After the cease-fire, we hope we can be friends,'" Dr. Rumer says.

Yet Dr. Bishop also read slogans in Persian and English on outdoor walls. "Almost consistently, you'd see 'Death to America,' and right beside it, 'Death to the Soviet Union,'" he says. Anti-U.S. sentiments are the stronger of the two because of the cultural impact of American television, consumer goods and fashions. "One young Iranian said, 'We've got kids in Tabriz who admire Michael Jackson. That's inside our boundaries.' That's a cultural intrusion in the view of the people of Iran," Dr. Bishop says.



The Network of Biblical Storytellers toured the U.S.S.R. in Aug. UCC pastor Malcom Bertram, NOBS president, and coordinator Margaret Eddy are welcomed by churches in Latvia.

(Photo by Steve Mack)

CRJ Group Decries UNITA Atrocities

Armed with a 20-page report on human rights violations and videotaped evidence, a Commission for Racial Justice delegation, recently back from Angola, is calling for an end to U.S. aid to South Africa-backed UNITA. UNITA, led by Jonas Savimbi, says it won't honor the Angola-Cuba-South Africa cease-fire.

The ecumenical group, urging the U.S. to establish full diplomatic relations with Angola, will present its findings to congressional leaders, particularly House and Senate Foreign Relations Committee members.

The 20 African-American national church and civil rights leaders toured Angola from Aug. 7-24, meeting with government officials, national and local church leaders, and displaced, maimed Angolan victims of war. The observers charged that:

- * UNITA land mines have maimed more than 20,000 Angolan women and children.

- * Many children have been forced to watch UNITA murder their loved ones.

- * UNITA has tortured and murdered church people. The report includes a partial list of church leaders killed by UNITA.

CRJ executive director Benjamin F. Chavis says, contrary to reports, UNITA does not enjoy popular support. "The only UNITA stronghold is where South African troops are concentrated. If South Africa keeps its commitment," he says, referring to the cease-fire, "either the U.S. protects UNITA or UNITA will have to leave Angola."

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Where Have All the Children Gone?

By Ed Heining

They tell us that we are growing older as a church. We recognize that our shrinking church schools and youth groups parallel the society's demographics. But where have all our children gone?—the generations who grew up and were confirmed in our churches? We have so counted on them as our churches' future membership that we didn't bother to recruit outsiders. Now where have all our children gone?

They moved away, out into the "far country" of the secular pluralistic world. Are they now in the UCC? In other churches? In no church at all? Living as prodigals? Statistical studies used to report that we lose more to the secular world and its psychological fads than to the conservative churches. Recent observations show that some of our children are turning to those churches that give them clear doctrine and narrow group boundaries which protect them from the uncertainties of the pluralistic society.

Yet we use the story of the prodigal to say, "They will come back to us some day after they have sowed their wild oats. As soon as they settle down and start a family, they will be back." But they have not come. They are not back with us and our churches! Have they become enamored by the secular consumerism of the world and made selfish indulgence their god? Have they tried to return and met too many resentful brothers and sisters among us? Have they started back and encountered too many directive parents who never wanted them to leave in the first place? Has their searching led them to psychologi-

cal groups more accepting than the churches? Perhaps those who were truly destitute and repentant have been restored by God's love in other groups.

They will return only if they find acceptance! Do they receive such from us? Have we become sensitive to the beat of their generation? Do they still hear resented words or simple formulas that are part of what drove them away? We claim to be open to a diversity of views as we share the common purpose of the mission of Christ. Do we permit our children to think for themselves and are we tolerant of their questions and doubt? We want them to mature, but have we understood their need for faith development and encouraged their growth? We claim to see all of life as a pilgrimage of faith under the watchful provision of a Living, Loving, Parent God. Can we let our children venture into the world with its dangers and trust that the Loving Parent God is really there? They are changing, but have we?

In our agony of hoping, praying, watching, have we parents become more like the Loving Parent? We can do so only as we truly forgive and accept, as God has forgiven and accepted us. Then we can be more welcoming to other peoples' children who may come to our church.

Ed Heining has served for over 20 years as the pastor of the Congregational UCC in Iowa City, IA.

Priorities Report

The Homeless Poor

EMMAUS UNITED CHURCH, Vienna, VA, budgeted money this year for a rent subsidy for a needy family. Through county social services, they found a woman who had been abused by her spouse and was living in a shelter with her three children. Finding her an apartment was the biggest task, says pastor Thomas Cox. "We had to deal with less-than-friendly housing managers who were reluctant to take her in, even with our help," he says. "She has proved to be a good tenant."

Youth/Young Adult Ministries

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, Akron, OH, has a scholarship fund to ensure that all the church's youths can afford college. Also, a yearly offering yields each college student in the church \$100 to be used for college or helping someone in need. "We find that when our students encounter problems, the first place they call is the church, and we like that," says minister Gabe Campbell.

Justice and Peace

Five people with disabilities, long unable to attend worship, are back at DANVILLE (VT) CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, thanks to improvements that include accessible bathrooms, an audio system for people with hearing impairments and a lift that serves three floors.

Spiritual Renewal

"Our worship planning team meets weekly to study the lectionary, plan worship and share our life experiences," says William Moremen, pastor of EDEN UCC, Hayward, CA. "Silence is considered as important as talking as we listen for the deeper words in scripture."

Worship Resources Look At UCC Past and Future

Journey into the Future, a 1988-1989 church life resources packet for laity and clergy, is now available from the UCC Office for Church Life and Leadership.

The three-book packet is designed to help church people in worship services and study groups understand the history and the theology of the UCC. The packet costs \$7. Each book can be purchased separately.

The Journey into the Future Worship Program Book (\$2.75) focuses on the theological foundations of the UCC. Its 11 chapters provide worship services and group activities based on different phrases found in the preamble to the UCC Constitution. Baptism and communion are among the topics it explores.

The Explorations Book (\$2.50) contains four complete worship services. Services are offered for Advent and Lent as well as for installations and farewells. An annotated bibliography lists resources for study groups and describes the UCC's ongoing ministries.

The Perspectives Book (\$2.50) offers articles by and about people who have helped shape the UCC. In such chapters as "The Energy is Powerful" and "The Best is Yet to Be," church members talk about their experiences in the UCC.

Another OCLL resource for local churches is the recent issue of the *Church Leadership Bulletin*, which reflects on the findings of a Family Thank Offering project on theology and the UCC.

Contact United Church Resources, 1400 North Seventh St., St. Louis, MO 63106, 800-325-7061.

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SEND NEWS stories, PHOTOS and OP-POSING VIEWS of 100 words or less to political or social stands taken in a particular article to KYP, Office of Communication, UCC, 105 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016.

Offer Safe Choices for Halloween

Churches are part of the growing ranks of groups offering safe and fun alternatives to trick-or-treating on Halloween. Here's what some UCC churches are doing this year.

Trinity UCC, Conover, NC, will keep its 30-year tradition of hosting a Halloween Carnival. The fair includes a costume competition, and a haunted house staffed by the church's youth group. Each Sunday school class and church group is responsible for a booth in which some craft is taught or treat given.

Last year, Parkwood Congregational UCC (Akewood, OH) had festivities that included a haunted house. But younger children were frightened by some costumes that months later, they were still afraid to enter the church. The church is considering hosting a haunted house this year instead. Also, some members, noting traditions of Halloween, expressed doubts that the church should observe the festivity.

Laurel Hill UCC in Suffolk, VA addressed this theological problem by holding a youth Bible study, complete with refreshments, on Halloween night instead of a party. Another church resolved this dilemma by hosting a Noah's Ark party, in which children dressed up as animals and told portions of the Bible story as entrance passwords.



Trinity UCC, Conover, NC, includes a costume contest in its Halloween Carnival.

Stillbirth Surfaces As Pastoral Problem During Baptism Colloquy at Craigville

We call upon the United Church of Christ to develop a rite of liturgical blessing for the stillborn, for infants that die at birth and for their parents.

In these circumstances, pastors are often called upon to baptize. Many do so in order to express the love of Christ to grieving parents.

The 70-or-so participants in the recent Craigville V Theological Colloquy on Cape Cod included those words in their "Letter and Witness" to the UCC, which they voted on after five days of presentations and discussions on the meaning and practice of baptism.

The 1,300-word document discusses baptism in light of the Bible, church history and recent ecumenical documents and invites

churchwide discussion and responses. (For a copy, contact Craigville Conference Center, Craigville, MA 02636, 617-775-1265).

The stillbirth paragraph--near the end, in a section on pastoral issues--describes a common dilemma for pastors and chaplains, says Jim Cunningham, president of UCC Chaplains in Health Care and assistant director of pastoral care at The Toledo (OH) Hospital. Chaplains there bless the child with a prayer, the sign of the cross and a trinitarian formula; a certificate documents the blessing. Mr. Cunningham can be reached at 419-471-3656. He also recommends a new resource, *Bittersweet...Hello goodbye* (Prairie Lark Press, P.O. Box 699-F, Springfield, IL 62705; \$12.50 plus \$2.50 shipping/handling).

When Members Stop Coming...Care!

Reaching out to members who have stopped attending church requires time and follow-up, but is part of a parish's caring ministry, says UC Board for Homeland Ministries secretary for evangelism R. Alan Johnson.

The point, he says, is not so much to get people to return to church, but that the church must care enough about people to build a relationship with them.

"The way we treat one another is the way we treat God," he explains, quoting a famed theologian. "If we don't reach out to members no longer engaged in the life of the church, we're lacking in our ministry of care."

Caring for members, Mr. Johnson says, means listening to them. Life transitions such as divorce or retirement can cause members to stop coming to church. During visits and calls on these members, their reasons for not communing surface. "At that point you can ask the member, 'How's your relationship

with God?' That may not happen until the second or third visit," he says.

For this ministry, Mr. Johnson advises churches to select members who can keep confidences and train them in listening skills. The people should have been members at least as long as the ones they will visit so that common parish experiences can be shared. Also, before going out, feelings toward those they will visit should be shared, as members sometimes resent those who withdraw and leave the work to a "faithful few."

Reaching out to members before they leave also is necessary, Mr. Johnson says. By noting changes in members' attendance a, a sensitive church can be alerted that something is happening in a member's life and help may be needed. When a member misses three consecutive services--weekly or monthly, depending on their attendance pattern--the member should be contacted.

General Synod Primer: Getting on the Agenda

Want to put an item on the UCC's next General Synod agenda? It's time to get started. Here are the kinds of items your congregation may submit for General Synod 17 in Fort Worth, TX, June 29-July 4, 1989. For rules on how to write such items, write to Carol Joyce Brun, Secretary, UCC, 105 Madison Ave., New York, NY 10016.

*** Proposed Pronouncement.** A statement of conviction on a matter of moral or social principle, based on biblical, theological and ethical grounds. It may come from a local church with written concurrence from at least five other congregations, a Synod delegate with concurrence from at least 10 other delegates from two or more UCC conferences, an association, a conference or a national body. Due Feb. 28, 1989 in Ms. Brun's office, which will mail all proposals to delegates, churches and other bodies in Apr.

*** Proposal for Action.** A recommendation of specific directions and goals for implementing a pronouncement (procedures and deadlines same as above).

*** Other Motions.** Proposed overtures, resolutions and other such expressions of opinion and suggestions for action. May come from a local church; any three delegates representing two or more conferences; or an association, conference, recognized special interest group or national body. Due in Ms. Brun's office by Feb. 22, 1989. After that, only motions that could not have been foreseen before the deadline will be considered; they are due by June 8, 1989.

EKU Pastor Begins Peace Work in U.S.

A UCC partner church minister has become the first East German pastor to do long-term peace work with U.S. church people through a project sponsored by the Penn Central Conference and UC Board for World Ministries.

In Sept., ECU minister Uwe Dittmer, pastor of the Heilig-Kreuz Congregation in Potsdam, began a yearlong term as a "peace partner" in the Penn Central Conference.

New Curricula Free of Anti-Semitic References

The Sept. *United Church News* article on anti-Semitism in the new curricula erroneously leaves the impression that the final material contains such references. On the contrary, using guidelines developed with the Anti-Defamation League followed by its curricula writers and editors, UC Board for Homeland Ministries carefully combed the manuscripts for potential problems and removed them. A letter sent to all UCC churches and ministers from Charles Shelby Rooks, executive vice president of UCBHM, and Beverly J. Chain, director, Office of Communication, states that these processes "have created new curricula which are remarkably free of anti-Semitism."

News Briefs

New Church Growth Statistics Released

Although the general population grew slightly from 1985-1986, few people joined the ranks of American church members during that period, according to statistics in the National Council of Churches' newly released *Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches 1988*. The book shows membership loss in mainline churches continuing, but moderating, as is the recent growth trend of some conservative churches. The 306-page book is available for \$18.95 at local book stores or Abingdon Press, 201 Eighth Ave. S., Nashville, TN 37202.

UCC Renewal Groups Act at Summer Meetings

The UCC Biblical Witness Fellowship established a missions committee to expand "Christ-centered" missions in the UCC, during its third national convocation in July in St. David's, PA. The committee will identify evangelical missions related to the UC Board for World Ministries or other UCC bodies. Also, the UCC Friends for Life board, meeting just before the BWF, hired a constituency development staff person. Registered nurse Robin Fox of Hilltown (PA) UCC will be responsible for the publication and distribution of a newsletter and other materials for the group and for general administrative functions.

Churches, Ministers Must Be Careful About Election Activities

With election season in full tilt, here are some reminders from a paper by Jay Lintner of the Office for Church in Society, commended to the UCC for study by the Executive Council last Mar.: It is legal and right for churches to take moral leadership and speak out on public issues, but Internal Revenue Service rules prohibit churches, as nonprofit organizations, from endorsing candidates for elective office. A minister, as an individual, may endorse candidates, provided the minister clearly is not speaking for any nonprofit organization. Any such statements should be made with care and humility, given a certain nervousness inside and outside the church when religious leaders speak in the political arena.

Bomb Explodes at South African Council of Churches Building

The South African Council of Churches' Johannesburg headquarters was bombed on Aug. 31. Seven SACC service staff and 18 area residents were injured, and the building, Khotso House, suffered major structural damage. The facility also served as a base for a number of human rights groups. UC Board for World Ministries South Africa consultant Di Scott is urging church people to send messages to President Reagan asking him to condemn the act and to press for a full investigation of the bombing.

UCC Video News Begins Cablecasting

United Church Video News will air on two cable networks this fall. The show, which replaces the Office of Communication's *Choice and Change* video magazine, will air 13 consecutive Tuesdays on ACTS, beginning Oct. 4. It will be shown three Sundays this year--Oct. 2 and 30 and Nov. 27--on the new ecumenical network, VISN. Check local listings for time.



Hungry children can't concentrate on school work. Hunger Action Fund gifts have helped support Interfaith Action for Economic Justice's advocacy for programs such as the successful Federal school breakfast program. Churches are encouraged to take the special appeal sometime this fall.

JOB OPPORTUNITY

A PROFESSOR is sought by Lancaster Theological Seminary to teach worship and preaching. Ordination and parish and teaching experience required. Doctorate degree preferred. Competence in church music and the arts helpful. Women and minorities encouraged to apply. Send resume by Oct. 30 to Nathan D. Baxter, Dean, Lancaster Theological Seminary, Lancaster, PA 17603.

UPCOMING EVENT

Nov. 20-27 marks the 48th annual observation of NATIONAL BIBLE WEEK, an interfaith effort to promote Bible reading and study. Free resources are available from the Laymen's National Bible Association, 815 Second Ave., New York, NY 10017, 212-687-0555.

UC Scene

UCC/Disciples actor turned clergy CRAIG MASON of BROADWAY UCC (NY) has taken on the road his show about Harry Emerson Fosdick, the controversial liberal Baptist preacher for whom John D. Rockefeller Jr. built New York City's Riverside Church. In "Dangerous Preaching," a product of his senior thesis for Union Theological Seminary, Mr. Mason weaves together excerpts from Fosdick's sermons and personal life. Since his May graduation, Mr. Mason has performed for churches around the country.

RECOMMENDED

ELECTIONS: IMAGE OR ISSUES, the fall issue of *MEDIA&VALUES*, sheds light on media and politics. It helps groups and individuals sift through propaganda and suggests ways for them to advocate for better coverage of issues. Special price through Nov. 1 is \$1 for 50 copies or more, \$2 for less. *MEDIA&VALUES*, 1962 S. Shenandoah, Los Angeles, CA 90034, 213-559-2944.

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